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UKHO warns of dangers posed by counterfeit nautical charts

The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office has issued a warning over the dangers posed to the safety of vessels, crews and cargoes by counterfeit nautical charts and publications and has produced a simple guide to help identify genuine Admiralty products.

The UK Hydrographic Office (UKHO) has recently observed an increase in the number of counterfeit versions of its Admiralty charts and publications in circulation. Counterfeit documents do not satisfy the carriage requirements of the International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), as they have not been issued officially by or on the authority of a Government, authorized hydrographic office or other relevant government institution. Their carriage may also fail to satisfy (and may be contrary to) the laws of Flag State Authorities and Port State Control, as well as increasing the safety risk for vessels, crews and cargoes. Furthermore, carriage of counterfeit documents is against the law in all countries that have signed the Berne Convention on copyright, which includes the vast majority of nations.

John Dawson, Head of Marketing at the UK Hydrographic Office, said:

“The UKHO urges all purchasers, users, inspectors and regulators to be vigilant for counterfeit Admiralty charts and publications. Because counterfeit versions have not been through the same rigorous checking procedures as official Admiralty charts and publications, they cannot be trusted for voyage planning or navigational purposes. As well as failing to comply with SOLAS carriage regulations and possibly also Flag State and Port State Control regulations, the use of counterfeit charts and publications poses a serious risk to vessel safety.

“We are actively seeking to stop the production and sale of counterfeit copies of our charts and publications and have raised our concerns with the International Maritime Organisation, the International Hydrographic Organisation and Flag States. We also encourage anyone that suspects they may be in possession of counterfeit products to get in touch with us.”

UKHO has produced a simple guide to help users and inspectors to distinguish official Admiralty charts and publications from counterfeit versions. Official Admiralty charts bear the Admiralty ‘Flying A’ watermark within the paper and will carry a ‘thumb label’ strip on the reverse with the Admiralty logo, chart number, geographical area, barcode and date.

Suspect charts and publications can also be identified by comparing them against official Admiralty versions, where variations may be spotted in the look, feel and weight of the product, the colour tone and strength of the ink, the folds on charts and the height and binding quality of publications.

Anyone with suspicions over the authenticity of their Admiralty charts and publications is asked to contact the UKHO by emailing customerservices@ukho.gov.uk. Copies of the UKHO’s guide to identifying genuine Admiralty products can also be downloaded from <http://bit.ly/admiralty-genuine>.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

About Admiralty and the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO)

1. UKHO produces a worldwide series of some 3,300 paper nautical charts, 160 publications under the Admiralty brand and has a growing portfolio of Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs). These charts are sold globally and used by nearly 70% of international shipping.
2. UKHO, a Government agency owned by the Ministry of Defence, has been charting the world's oceans for more than 200 years with the primary aim of providing navigational services for the Royal Navy and merchant mariners to save and protect lives at sea. In addition it serves small craft and leisure mariners and provides a range of consultancy services.
3. UKHO is a Trading Fund, which means it has the freedom to trade commercially to generate revenue and cover running costs.
4. UKHO also plays a central role, in support of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, in discharging the navigation element of the UK's Safety of Life at Sea Treaty obligations for waters of UK national responsibility.

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